

Census in Brief

Living arrangements of young adults aged 20 to 29



Families, households and marital status, 2011 Census of Population



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Introduction

Young adulthood is a unique time in the lives of many individuals as they make the transition from adolescence to the greater responsibilities of adulthood. The living arrangements of young adults aged 20 to 29—including the propensity to live in the parental home, as well as to be part of couples—have evolved considerably over the past 30 years, reflecting both cultural norms and socio-economic conditions.

Stable share of young adults living in the parental home

The 2011 Census of Population showed that 42.3% of the 4,318,400 young adults aged 20 to 29 lived in the parental home,¹ either because they never left it or because they returned home after living elsewhere.² This proportion changed little from 2006 (42.5%). However, it was higher than in preceding decades: 32.1% in 1991 and 26.9% in 1981.

Young adults may live with their parents as a source of emotional or financial support. More specifically, possible reasons for which young adults in their twenties remain in or return to the parental home³ include not being part of a couple (which may be the result of relationship breakdown), cultural preferences, cost of housing, pursuit of higher education or difficulty finding employment. While this arrangement is generally perceived to be more beneficial to the younger generation, exchanges of support could occur in both directions to the extent that adult children contribute to the household in various ways.

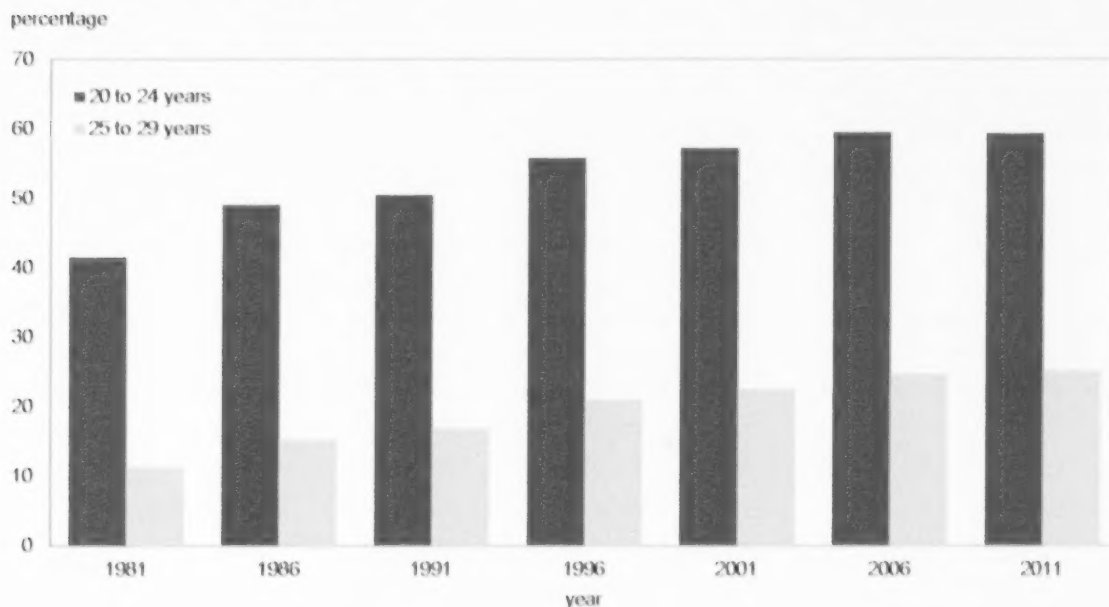
The share of young adults that were living with parents has been higher for those in their early twenties compared to those in their late twenties, although for much of the past several decades it has been increasing for both age groups ([Figure 1](#)).

1. Refers to sons or daughters in an economic family. For more information on economic family status, see the 2011 Census Dictionary, Catalogue no. 98-301-X.

2. As per the instructions on the census questionnaire, students who return to live with their parents during the year should be included at their parent's address, even if they live elsewhere while attending school or working at a summer job.

3. For more information, see P. Beaupré, P. Turcotte and A. Milan. 2006. 'Junior comes back home: Trends and predictors of returning to the parental home.' *Canadian Social Trends*. Statistics Canada. Catalogue no. 11-008, winter, p. 28-34, Ottawa.

Figure 1 Percentage of young adults aged 20 to 24 and 25 to 29 living in the parental home, Canada, 1981 to 2011



Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1981 to 2011.

Among young adults aged 20 to 24, 59.3% lived in the parental home, about the same as in 2006 (59.5%), but higher than the 41.5% who did so in 1981. For 25- to 29-year-olds, one-quarter (25.2%) lived with their parents in 2011, up slightly from 24.7% in 2006, and more than double the 11.3% share in 1981.

Young men are more likely to live at home than young women. In 2011, 46.7% of men in their twenties lived in the parental home compared to 37.9% of women in this age group. This could be because women tend to form unions at younger ages than men⁴ and, therefore, leave home at an earlier age to establish their own households.

In their early twenties, 63.3% of young men lived at home in 2011, as did 55.2% of young women. For both men and women in their late twenties, the shares were lower, at 29.6% for men and 20.9% for women.

Most young adults living with their parents in 2011 had never been legally married (95.9%), although some may have returned home following the dissolution of a common-law union. An additional 2.1% had a married spouse or common-law partner also present in the home. The remaining 2.0% were widowed, divorced, separated or married with an absent spouse.

4. Milan, A. and L. Martel. 2008. Nuptiality and divorce, *Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 91-209.

Among the provinces and territories, the highest proportion of young adults living in the parental home in 2011 was in Ontario (50.6%), up slightly from 2006 (50.2%). Newfoundland and Labrador had the largest share in 2006 (51.1%), but by 2011, this had dropped to 44.7%. The provinces with the lowest proportions of young adults living with their parents in 2011 were Saskatchewan (30.6%) and Alberta (31.4%).

At the census division⁵ level, there were larger shares of young adults in the parental home in the Atlantic provinces—particularly Nova Scotia—and southern Ontario, and lower proportions in the Prairie provinces and southeastern Quebec (see [Map](#)).

In general, shares of living in the parental home were above the national average in areas where the cost of living was relatively high, in areas with high proportions of immigrants, or both, although other reasons could also account for variation across the country.

Eight of the 10 census metropolitan areas⁶ with shares of young adults in the parental home exceeding that of Canada (42.3%) were in Ontario, the highest of which was Toronto (56.3%). In several municipalities (census subdivisions) within the Toronto CMA, over three-quarters of young adults lived in the parental home in 2011, including King (78.5%), Richmond Hill (76.5%), Caledon (76.1%), Vaughan (76.0%) and Pickering (75.6%).⁷

Additionally, living at home for young adults was higher than the national average in Vancouver, British Columbia (46.7%) and Winnipeg, Manitoba (43.3%).

The census metropolitan areas with the smallest shares of young adults living with their parents were Sherbrooke, Quebec (25.5%), Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (27.6%) and Moncton, New Brunswick (27.7%).

For more information at various levels of geography, see the Highlight table *Young adults in the parental home for the population aged 20 to 29 in private households*, Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011002.

Proportion of young adults living as part of couples continues to decrease

The share of young adults aged 20 to 29 living in couples has continued its long-term decline. In 2011, about 3 in 10 (30.8%) young adults in their twenties were in a couple, down from 32.8% in 2006. Thirty years earlier, in 1981, more than half (51.8%) of young adults were part of couples.

More people in their late twenties were in couples than those in their early twenties, but proportions have declined for both age groups. The share of 20- to 24 year-olds in couples was 16.1% in 2011, down from 36.4% in 1981. For people in their late twenties, 45.7% were part of couples in 2011, a drop from 68.3% thirty years earlier.

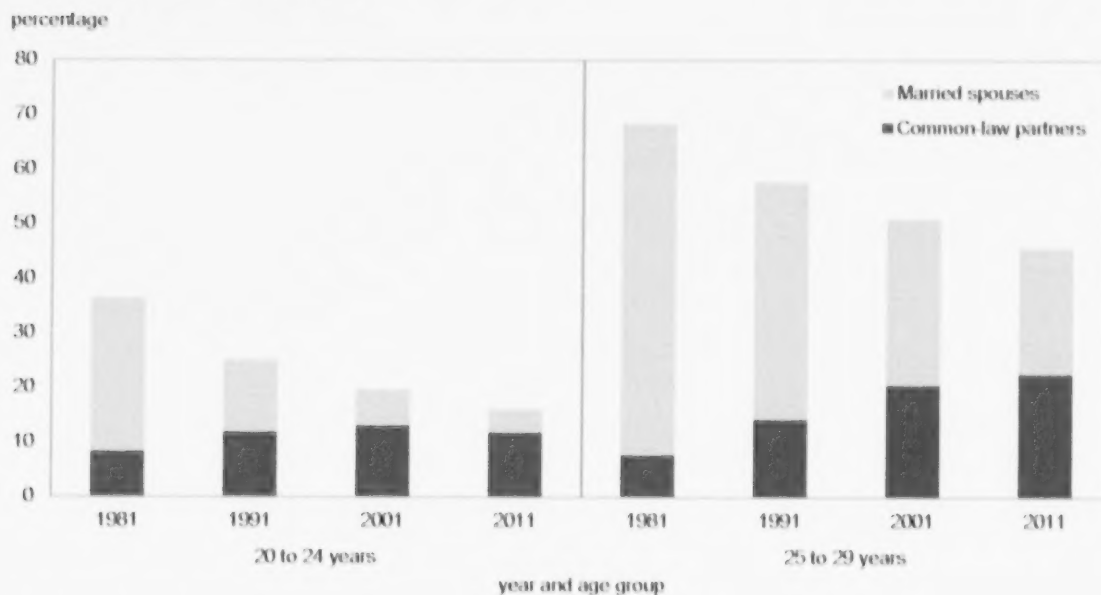
5 A census division (CD) is a group of neighbouring municipalities joined together for the purposes of regional planning and managing common services (such as police or ambulance services). These groupings are established under laws in effect in certain provinces and territories of Canada.

6 A census metropolitan area (CMA) is an area consisting of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a core. A census metropolitan area must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the core. A census agglomeration (CA) is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a population centre (known as the core). A CA must have a core population of at least 10,000.

7 A census subdivision is an area that is a municipality or an area that is deemed to be equivalent to a municipality for statistical reporting purposes (e.g., as an Indian reserve or an unorganized territory). Municipal status is defined by laws in effect in each province and territory in Canada. The central municipality (census subdivision) of a CMA or CA is the one that tends to lend its name to the CMA and the CA. For example in the Montréal census metropolitan area, the central municipality is the City of Montréal. All other municipalities within the boundaries of the CMA or CA are considered peripheral to the central municipality.

Among young adults in their early twenties, 11.8% lived in a common-law couple in 2011, nearly three times the 4.3% who were part of a married couple. In contrast, in 1981, 8.4% of adults aged 20 to 24 were in common-law unions and 28.0% were married (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Percentage of young adults aged 20 to 24 and 25 to 29 in couples by conjugal status, Canada, 1981 to 2011



Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1981 to 2011.

Despite the overall larger share of adults in their early twenties who were common-law partners compared to married spouses, the proportion of 20- to 24-year-olds that lived common-law has been falling since 2001, when it was 13.1%. Young adults aged 20 to 24 may be focusing to a greater extent on personal, educational or other pursuits outside of those generally associated with being a couple.

In their late twenties, similar proportions of young adults were in common-law unions (22.6%) in 2011 as were part of married couples (23.1%). Three decades earlier, in 1981, more than two-thirds (60.7%) of those in their late twenties were married spouses and 7.7% were common-law partners.

Throughout the thirty-year period between 1981 and 2011, living in a couple was more common among women aged 20 to 29 than men in this age group, reflecting the tendency of women to be younger than their spouses or partners. Young women experienced a decrease in the share living in couples from 58.8% in 1981 to 36.5% in 2011, compared to a decline from 44.7% to 25.2% for young men over the same period.

About 1 in 4 young adults live in other arrangements

Not all of Canada's young adults aged 20 to 29 lived in the parental home or in couples. Some men and women in their twenties lived in other arrangements.

About 3.2% of young adults aged 20 to 29 were lone parents in 2011 (5.6% of women and 0.8% of men). This share has been less than 4% for the past 30 years.

In addition, over one million women and men in their twenties lived outside of census families in 2011, representing nearly one-quarter (24.0%) of this age group, higher than in 1981 (19.9%).

Young adults who lived outside of census families in 2011 lived with non-relatives only—that is, as room-mates, lodgers or boarders—(11.6%), alone (9.2%), or with other relatives such as siblings, cousins, aunts or uncles (3.2%).

During this time in their lives, young adults may be pursuing their education as well as becoming more financially independent. Co-residing with others who are neither immediate family nor a married spouse nor common-law partner may be a way to reduce costs, or it may provide companionship, or both.

Note to readers

Random rounding and percentage distributions: To ensure the confidentiality of responses collected for the 2011 Census while maintaining the quality of the results, a random rounding process is used to alter the values reported in individual cells. As a result, when these data are summed or grouped, the total value may not match the sum of the individual values, since the total and subtotals are independently rounded. Similarly, percentage distributions, which are calculated on rounded data, may not necessarily add up to 100%.

Due to random rounding, counts and percentages may vary slightly between different census products, such as the analytical document, highlight tables, and topic-based tabulations.

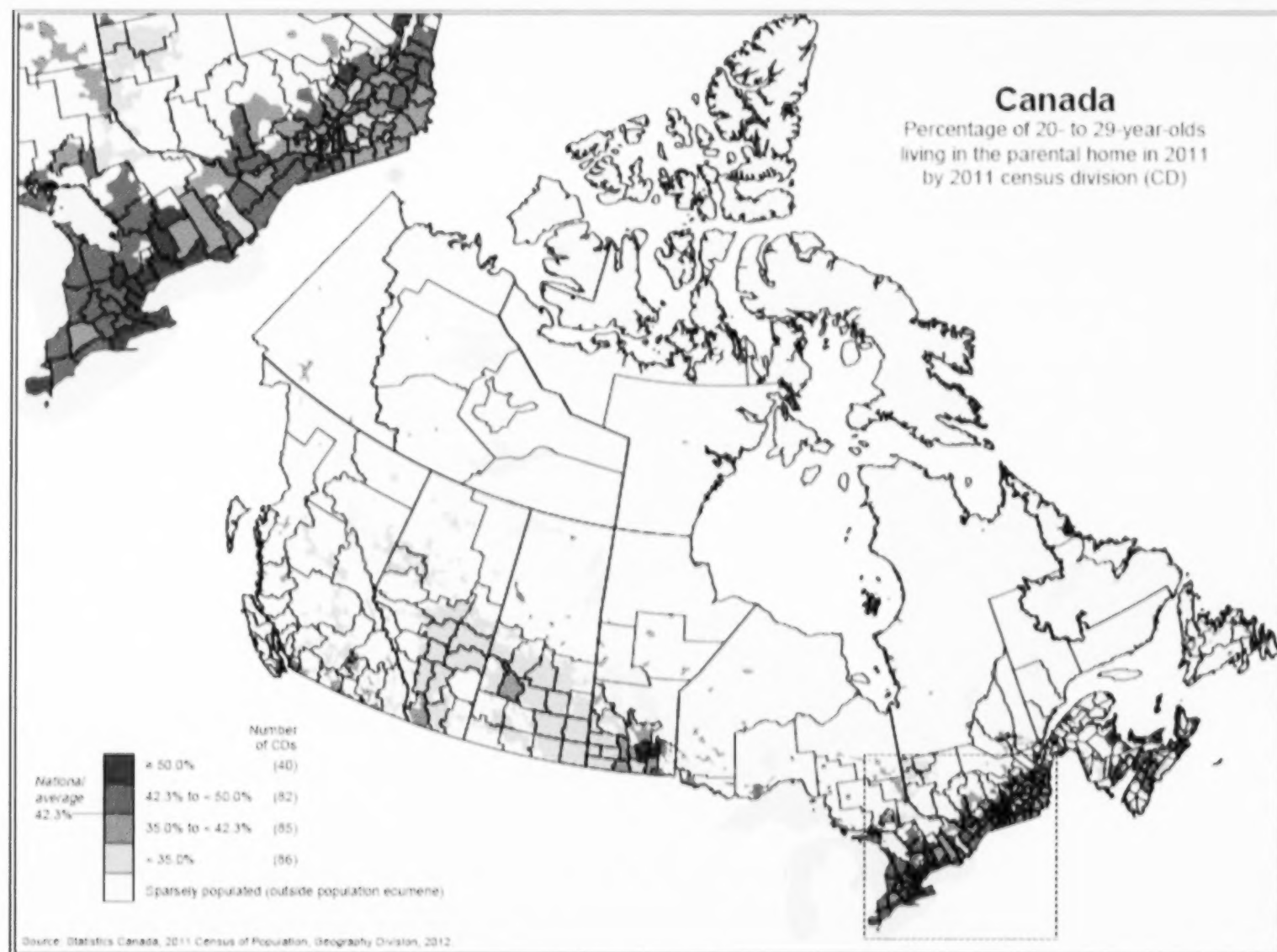
Additional information

Additional information on specific geographies can be found in the [Highlight tables](#), Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011002.

Acknowledgments

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Map – Percentage of 20- to 29-year-olds living in the parental home in 2011 by 2011 census division (CD)



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